**Determinants of religious sectarianism and intolerance: Implications for social inclusion in Pakistan**

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**Abstract**

Religious sectarianism originates from the strong and rigid belief system of members of different sects that triggers conflicts and intolerance (Shahzad et.al, 2022). Islam is the main religion practiced in Pakistan with two main sects i.e. Shia and Sunni. Each of these sects are further divided into subsects. Literature shows that there are more than 100 religious sects out of these two sects and its number is expanding gradually. The major subsects of Sunni include Brelvi, Deobandi and Ahl-e-Hadith. Islam lacks any information in Quran and Hadiths regarding the recognition of these sects. However, it is important to identify that which sect truly interprets what the Quran and Hadiths teach us. A general hatred is found in these sects for each other, and sectarian intolerance is rising both within the sects and between the sects. This intolerance not only affect the integrity of Islam but also damaging the non-Muslim communities (Ullah, 2009). Literature shows different incidents of religious intolerance which has led into various conflicts and terrorism activities including the respective causes. Some studies report the positive relationship between the per capita income and incidence of terrorist activities (Blomberg, Hess, & Orphanides, 2004; Tavares, 2004; Lai, 2007; Krueger & Laitin, 2008; Freytag et al., 2011). On the other hand, some studies pinpoint the negative correlation between income and the probability of terrorist attacks (Bravo & Dias, 2006; Blomberg & Hess, 2008; Dreher & Fischer, 2010). Income inequality is another factor causing distress and anger in public which further drives them to engage in violence and terrorism (Lai, 2007; Salvatore, 2007; Krieger & Meierrieks, 2011). Similarly, political instability also positively influences terrorism incidents where terrorism activities are often easily practiced in weak democratic systems and vice versa (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). In Pakistan, there are many incidents showing the violent conflicts between Shia and Sunnis.Different sects have built their own mosques and triggers their own school of thought among the community. This situation has serious implications on the social tolerance and social inclusion in Pakistan. Sometimes, terrorism incidents happen between individual families with reasons other than sectarianism but are projected in way that further deteriorates social inclusion in the country. In order to harmonize the cultural diversity in Pakistan, it is important to make these sects communicate with each other and establish a common goal. This can also create opportunities for our country to become more open to the global economy.

**Key Words:** Religious sectarianism, Intolerance, Social inclusion, Pakistan